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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

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ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

September 25, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John H. Holdridge

SUBJECT: The Viet Cong Infrastructure and Military Proselyting

Director of Central Intelligence Helms has sent you a memorandum enclosing two recent CIA studies (Tab A).

A. "The Communist Infrastructure"

The first, entitled "The Communist Infrastructure," examines the Communists' current political control apparatus in South Vietnam, assesses trends in its strength and effectiveness, and estimates its probable viability under alternative assumptions about the nature of the struggle in South Vietnam over the next year or so.

Size. The study does not attempt to estimate the numerical size of the infrastructure. It emphasizes the considerable difficulties involved in accurately defining members of the infrastructure, and the resulting inadequacies of numerical estimates produced earlier by CIA and currently by the Phoenix program.

Trends. The study concludes that the infrastructure has declined in quantity and quality during the past two years or so. The most persuasive evidence of this comes from captured documents, prisoners, and ralliers. A recently captured COSVN report also indicated that the accelerated pacification programs and Phoenix are the most effective threat to the infrastructure the Allies have mounted so far. The study notes, however, that it is not possible to determine whether the numerical strength of the infrastructure is currently increasing or decreasing. The lower enemy casualty rate this year, the transfer of personnel from military to civilian functions, and the continuing infil-

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tration of North Vietnamese civilian cadre have all helped to offset earlier losses.

Future prospects. The overall course of the struggle is the primary factor in determining the future size and quality of the infrastructure; should the Communists regain some momentum, new recruits of all types would be much easier to come by. A low battlefield profile and continuing civilian infiltration from the North would also favor the continuation of an effective infrastructure.

A cease fire would deny the Allies the use of their greatest asset -- their military forces -- and would allow the Communists to transfer even larger numbers of personnel from military to political tasks. Under the most optimistic of plausible assumptions governing a cease fire, the Communist infrastructure might suffer additional attrition after a year or so. But even then the hard core would remain intact and reasonably effective. Should current circumstances continue, on the other hand, the Communists would probably face the same kind of problems which they do now, and a further decline in the effectiveness of their infrastructure would seem more likely than under a cease fire.

#### B. "Communist Subversion in the South Vietnamese Army and Security Apparatus"

The second memorandum, "Communist Subversion in the South Vietnamese Army and Security Apparatus," is a lengthy exposition of Communist military proselyting. This subject is seldom addressed but it is important, for military proselyting is one of the three major theoretical aspects of the Communists' overall struggle. The study goes into considerable detail in describing the proselyting apparatus and its functions -- encouraging minor mutinies and desertions, aiding attack forces, gathering intelligence, and so forth. As a broad order of magnitude, the study estimates that there were 20,000 proselyting agents operating within the RVNAF and GVN security services in early 1969. Of these, about half were of uncertain reliability, and were best classified as Communist "sympathizers" rather than as active agents. Since then, the Communists have embarked upon a campaign to step up their military proselyting, but there is little evicence ~~with~~ which to assess the results of this effort so far.

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The Communists have encountered problems in military proselyting. The RVNAF is now twice the size that it was a few short years ago. Moreover, GVN security services have generally become more effective and lately have become more sensitive to the Communists' subversive influence within military ranks.

Nevertheless, Communist military proselyting has had a substantial effect upon the performance of the RVNAF, and the GVN still faces some fundamental problems in countering military proselyting. The study offers the following conclusions:

-- The tepid allegiance of most GVN soldiers allows the Communists' subversive network to survive within the RVNAF.

-- The GVN security organizations have been inadequate in their efforts to combat military proselyting, and there is little assurance that they will be able to prevent the growth of this activity.

9- The enemy military proselyting effort has received scant attention in allied prognoses of the war. Since the impact of proselyting is largely unmeasured, many of the favorable trends in Chieu Hoi and HES statistics are exaggerated.

#### Comment.

Neither of these studies seem particularly valuable. The memorandum on the Communist infrastructure is somewhat refreshing in its honest treatment of the problems concerning numerical estimates of the infrastructure. Otherwise, however, the text is simply too thin to be of much use. How the Communist infrastructure would fare under a cease fire as opposed to a continuation of the status quo is given rather superficial treatment. The study states, for example, that the subversive part of the infrastructure operating in GVN territory might be more vulnerable after a cease fire. How and why it might become so is not mentioned; indeed, the questions of how the infrastructure might be expected to operate and how effective it might be during a cease fire are left unanswered. And it is just this type of question that needs to be explored at length before any meaningful estimate can be made.

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The study on military proselyting provides a service by focusing on an aspect of the conflict that seldom receives attention. We believe that enemy proselyting is important and that it represents a continuing problem; however, we also believe that the study is somewhat overdrawn, particularly in terms of the conclusions offered. They are not solidly supported and strike us more as assertions, despite the 85 paragraphs of text. To judge GVN security efforts as "inadequate," for example, is debatable (though GVN efforts could certainly be improved); in view of the increase in the size and effectiveness of the RVNAF over the past few years one might just as easily judge Communist military proselyting as inadequate, in which case the word loses any real meaning. We also have problems with the conclusion that many of the favorable trends in HES and Chieu Hoi statistics are exaggerated because we are unable to measure the impact of enemy military proselyting. The study rightfully points out that there is no way to determine what proportion of desertions and other military problems facing the GVN are caused by Communist proselyting. But we certainly are aware of the overall magnitude of RVNAF desertions and other military weaknesses -- regardless of their cause -- and we believe that they are given due consideration.

Finally, the two studies form a rather awkward contrast. While the infrastructure study assiduously avoids a numerical approach and takes pains to explain the inadequacies of past estimates, the proselyting study employs just such a numerical approach -- and on one of the most difficult aspects of the Communists' entire structure.

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Tab A

The Communist Infrastructure - 2 copies

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